



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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POVERTY IS A FACTOR IN KENTUCKY STUDENTS' SCHOOL READINESS

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – Many Kentucky students are at a disadvantage for learning before they even start school, according to Kindergarten Readiness Screener data released by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Only about half of the students who entered kindergarten in 2015-16 were ready, the Kentucky Board of Education learned at its meeting in Frankfort today. School readiness is defined in [704 KAR 5:070](#) as “a student entering school is ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the student’s success.”

“Unfortunately, not all children have the same opportunities to develop and learn before they enter school,” Education Commissioner Stephen Pruitt said. “The reality is that poverty has a big impact on education in Kentucky. It is a reality that puts children at a disadvantage when they enter school and one that we must address from day one.”

Nearly 64 percent of the students entering kindergarten this year qualified for free- and reduced-price meals.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS BY STUDENT GROUP

Group	Number Tested			Kindergarten Ready Percentage		
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
All Students	50,532	49,089	46,789	49.0	50.0	50.1
Male	25,707	25,130	24,065	43.6	44.6	45.2
Female	24,825	23,959	22,724	54.5	55.6	55.2
White (Non-Hispanic)	38,735	37,389	35,538	51.2	52.1	52.7
African American	5,196	5,158	4,818	44.2	46.3	44.5
Hispanic	3,595	3,486	3,362	28.0	28.7	27.7
Asian	731	737	804	61.6	64.2	59.1
American Indian/Alaska Native	63	55	55	49.2	45.5	50.9
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	70	51	61	51.4	49.0	31.1
Two or more races	2,141	2,210	2,150	50.5	51.0	50.9
Limited English Proficiency	2,890	2,886	2,788	26.1	28.7	26.0
Free/Reduced-Price Meals	31,145	31,600	29,840	37.6	39.4	39.7
Students with Disabilities	6,405	7,034	6,076	28.2	27.6	31.1

Research shows that children from low-income families have a vocabulary of about 525 words by age 3 — about half that of children from middle- and higher-income families. On average, children from disadvantaged homes enter kindergarten at least two grade levels behind their peers.

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“We cannot let the opportunity gap determine a student’s future,” Pruitt said. “That’s why this data is so important. It provides kindergarten teachers with key information early in the school year that they can use to guide instruction and provide targeted support and interventions aimed at closing learning gaps before they have a chance to widen.”

This is the third year that the Kindergarten Readiness Screener has been given statewide to all incoming kindergarten students. Teachers administered the BRIGANCE K Screener to 46,789 students in all 173 school districts at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year. Students are asked their name and age, to recite the alphabet and count to 30, among other tasks.

The screener provides a snapshot of student readiness in the following domains: academic/cognitive, language development, physical development, self-help, and social-emotional. Performing at a certain level is not a requirement to enter kindergarten.

As part of the screener, parents also fill out a survey on their child’s ability to help him or herself and social-emotional development, though this information is not factored into readiness scores.

Parents also are asked to fill out a survey about what type of setting the child was in the year before starting kindergarten. The questionnaire did not distinguish whether the program was a half-day or full-day program, or the duration a child spent in a particular setting. Students can be included in multiple prior settings.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS BY PRIOR SETTING (parent reported)

Prior Setting	Number Tested			Kindergarten Ready Percentage		
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
State Funded Preschool	14,987	17,396	16,559	44.9	47.4	48.1
Head Start	5,822	6,615	6,603	42.4	44.5	45.8
Child Care	9,562	10,652	10,673	70.0	69.9	70.1
Home	10,468	13,629	12,618	37.4	37.9	36.2
Other	5,152	5,596	5,190	60.3	61.3	61.2
Unknown	9,857	2,171	1,947	45.2	41.0	41.1

The settings include:

- State-Funded Preschool – State-funded preschool serves three- and four-year old children. Three-year old children qualify based on developmental delay; four-year old children qualify based on developmental delay or family income.
- Head Start – Federally-funded program serving three- and four-year old children. Children qualify based on developmental delay and family income.

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- Child care – Privately owned, licensed child care facilities and certified homes; usually private pay or subsidized.
- Home – Home with parent or guardian
- Other – Non-licensed child care facilities, baby-sitters, kin care
- Unknown – No data gathered from families

Resources to support quality learning experiences are available for parents and for early care and education providers on [the Kentucky Department of Education](#) and the [Governor's Office for Early Childhood](#) websites.

The kindergarten readiness screener data is available in the supplemental data section of KDE's [Open House](#).

To learn more about the common kindergarten screener or to view an early childhood data profile on your area, visit the Governor's Office for Early Childhood website at <http://kidsnow.ky.gov>.

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